

XII. *A Letter from Arthur Dobbs Esq; of Castle-Dobbs in Ireland, to the Rev. Mr. Charles Wetstein, Chaplain and Secretary to His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, concerning the Distances between Asia and America.*

S I R,

Read April 9. 1747. **I** AM extremely obliged to you for the Trouble you have taken, in corresponding with Professor *Euler* * upon the *Russian* Discoveries Eastward from *Kamschatka*, and communicating to me the Accounts he had of *Behring's* last Voyage, and of his Discovery of the Lands North-East of *Japan*; which the Professor could only have inaccurately, not having seen any Journal to fix the Latitude and Longitude of the Countries he then discover'd: But since Professor *Euler*, sway'd by the Opinion of Captain *Behring*, seems still to believe that the last Land he discover'd is joined to *California*, which Country is now known to be Part of the Continent of *America*, and not an Island (in which Fact of its being continuous to *California* I differ still in Opinion from him,) for, if that were a Fact to be depended upon, I would candidly own, that there could be no Passage from the North-West of *Hudson's-Bay* to the Western Ocean of *America*, without sailing near 70° of Longitude; the Distance of the North-East Cape of *Asia* from the North-West of *Hudson's-Bay*, in a Parallel almost as far North as the Polar Circle, before the Passage
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* See *Transf.* N^o. 482, p. 421.

can be made to the *Pacific Ocean*; which might therefore be very reasonably call'd an impracticable Passage, as it could not possibly be made in one Summer, if at all); and since Professor *Euler* has been so kind as to give me Captain *Behring's* Reasons for supporting his Opinion, which are principally from the small Distance he supposed it was, from the Coast he discover'd, to the Western *American* Coast at *California* (which he imagin'd was much nearer his North-East Cape of *Asia* than it is in Fact); I must therefore, in return to the Professor's Goodness, in communicating to me all he has known in that Discovery, beg Leave to give you this further Trouble of communicating to the Professor my Reason for still dissenting from *Behring's* Opinion, that the Land he discover'd last was Part of the Continent of *America*, or continuous with *California*; and if he find the Reasons for supporting my Opinion make it more probable, that there still may be a large Opening betwixt these new-discover'd Countries and *California*, I am sensible it will give the ingenious and learned Professor great Pleasure, to think we may yet hope for a Passage by *Hudson's-Bay* to the Western *American* Ocean, without being obstructed with Ice after passing *Hudson's-Sreight*.

The Professor imagines I might have been led astray, by not considering, that the North-East Cape of *Asia* is much more Easterly than has been laid down in any former Charts; which is now known accurately, by the Eclipse of the Moon observed by Captain *Behring* at *Kamschatka*.

I have an Abstract of his Journal by me, upon his first Discovery in 1728, and 1729, when he observed that Eclipse, and the Calculation of the Longitude
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from it ; and stand by his Longitude he has fix'd ; and allow that his North-East Cape is in the other Hemisphere ; reckoning Eastward, either from *Fero*, as the first Meridian, or from *London* ; which last I shall follow.

Behring fixes his North-East Cape $126^{\circ} 7'$ East Longitude from *Tobolski* ; and *Tobolski* is 86° East from *Fero* ; so the Cape is $212^{\circ} 7'$ East of *Fero*, or about 194° East from *London*. — By Captain *Middleton*'s Observation of *Jupiter's Satellite* at *Churchill* River in *Hudson's Bay*, that River is 95° West from *London* ; which, added to 194° , makes 289° ; consequently the North-East Cape of *Asia* is 71° distant from *Churchill*, to complete 360° ; which, in the Latitude of 65° , computing 8 Leagues to a Degree of Longitude, of which 20 make a Degree of Latitude, the Distance betwixt that Cape and *Hudson's Bay* would be 568 such Leagues.

From the known Longitude of the North Cape of *Japon* in 40° Latitude, which is pretty exactly known, from the Observations made by the Jesuits at *Peking*, and is about 150° East from *London*, and from the best computed Longitude of *California* in 40° North Latitude, it lies in 130° Longitude West from *London*, making together 280° , leaves 80° for the Distance of *California* from *Japon* ; allowing 17 Leagues to a Degree of Longitude in 40° North Latitude, the Distance would be about 1360 Leagues : By the same Calculation *California* must be at least 7 or 800 such Leagues from the North-East Cape of *Asia* ; so that, in so great a Space there may be very great Countries or Islands *, without supposing the new discover'd Country continuous to *California*, and might well allow of an open Chanel or Sea, from 50 to 100 Leagues wide, between the discover'd Coast and *California*.

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By the Account given to Professor *Euler*, *Behring* sailed Southwardly to the Isles of *Japon*, and from thence sailed Eastwardly 50 *German* Miles, about 250 *English* Miles; which makes about 80 Leagues, of 20 to a Degree. At that Distance from *Japon* he discover'd Land, which he coasted North-West; still approaching towards the North-East Cape, without going ashore, until he came to the Entrance of a great River; where sending his Boats and Men ashore, they never return'd, being either lost, kill'd, or detain'd by the Natives, which made his Discovery incomplete; his Ship being stranded, and he afterwards died in an uninhabited Island.

As no Latitudes nor Longitudes are fixed by this Account, I must believe he sailed from *Kamschatka* South-East, perhaps more Southerly than to 50° Latitude; and there found Land North-East from *Japon*; otherwise, by coasting it North-West, he could never approach the North-East Cape, which is, at least, 40° Longitude East of *Japon*; and if he made Land 80 Leagues East of *Japon*, he must have sailed North-East to make the North-East Cape. I have therefore Reason to believe this Coast was Part of that he saw in his first Voyage, where he lost his Anchor; and is the Coast *Gama* discover'd, and the *Dutch* afterwards called the *Company's Land*, East of the Streights of *Uzicez*, which is at least 7 or 800 Leagues

* The *Japonefe*, in their Maps of the World printed in *Japon*, have laid down in this very Tract two Islands as large as *Ireland*, with the Names to them, as appears in that Map bought by Dr. *Kempfer* in *Japon* in 1686; now in Sir *Hans Sloane's* Museum.

Leagues West of any known Land of *America*, and above 1000 near the Latitude of *Japon*: So that, if I should allow 700 Leagues for Countries or Islands East of his new-discover'd Coast, there might still be a Passage of 100 Leagues for the Southern or *Pacific Ocean* to communicate with *Hudson's Bay*, and to cause such great Tides and Currents, as are found on the North-West of *Hudson's Bay*; as also a free Passage for the Whales, which are seen in all the Openings North-West of that Bay, and are caught there in Numbers by the *Eskemaux* Savages: For, as these don't go in by *Hudson's Streight* from our *Atlantic Ocean*, it cannot be presumed that they should go up by *Japon* towards the North-East Cape, and from thence go 70°, or above 560 Leagues, to *Hudson's Bay*, and be there in the Month of *June*, and, after staying until *September*, return again the same Way to the Southern Ocean, to pass the Winter.— Now, as *Behring* only coasted at a Distance, he could not possibly know whether it was a Continent, or great Island; the last of which seems the most probable: However, a few Months now, if our Ships return safe, will give us a Certainty on one Side or the other; altho' I am sanguine enough to believe they have by this time sailed through, and discover'd this so much wish'd for Passage.

These, Sir, are the Reasons I have still to expect Success in the Attempt I have promoted; and, if you think it may give any Satisfaction to Professor *Euler* to know the Reasons that support my Belief of a practicable safe Passage, be pleas'd to communicate it to him, with my Compliments for the Trouble I

have given him by you, and accept of my best Acknowledgments for your Favours. I am, with the greatest Regard and Esteem,

S I R,

Castle-Dobbs, Feb. 10.

1746-7.

Your most obedient

humble Servant,

Arthur Dobbs.

XIII. *A Letter from the Rev. Mr. G. Coffard, to the Rev. Thomas Shaw, D. D. F. R. S. and Principal of St. Edmund-Hall, concerning the Chinese Chronology and Astronomy.*

Reverend Sir,

Read April 30. **T**HE Subject of our late Conversation turn'd upon the Affectation of some Nations, in carrying up their Histories to so immoderate a Height, as plainly to shew those Accounts to be fictitious and without Foundation. This, it was agreed, was the Case of the *Babylonian* and *Egyptian* Accounts; and you seem'd to think it would be found, to be the same with any other People that should make the like Pretensions.

The only People in later Times that have been thought to contradict this Opinion are the *Chinese*, of whose History the World hath been taught